

## **Section 4: Making the Model Work for Your Program**

The Fathers for Life Curriculum Manual contains a curriculum developed during the course of Missouri's Innovation and Improvement project. These curricula address many of the needs of fathers in the criminal justice system. Fathers participating in the evaluation expressed a wide variety of opinions and attitudes about their roles as fathers and exhibited the following parenting characteristics:

- More appropriate expectations for children than many in the general population (65<sup>th</sup> percentile);
- Moderately low nurturance and empathy for children (31<sup>st</sup> percentile);
- Views about corporal punishment characteristic of the general population (50<sup>th</sup> percentile);
- Tendencies that match the general population regarding adult expectations of their roles with children (46<sup>th</sup> percentile); and
- Difficulties viewing children with power as a threat and unrealistic expectations for unquestioning obedience (28<sup>th</sup> percentile) (Fuger & Abel, 2008).

### **Fathers for Life Interventions-Community Setting**

#### **Parent Education**

A number of parent education sessions—both single, stand-alone, and multiple-series sessions—are incorporated into Fathers for Life. Some of the parent education curricula were developed specifically for fathers while others focus on both parents. All of the curricula are designed for use without extensive train-the-trainer exercises. With the exception of 24/7 Dad™, which is owned by the National Fatherhood Initiative, the curricula are not copyrighted and can be reproduced and distributed as needed.

#### **Proud Parent**

The Proud Parent workshop is designed not only to introduce fathers to Fathers for Life interventions but also to deliver basic parenting information. Findings from key informant interviews and focus groups suggest many fathers had not cultivated the skills needed to successfully address their responsibilities and supervision conditions upon release from prison. One informant stated, “Most of these guys have never had anything positive happen to them. They’ve never achieved anything, whether it’s been in life or with their families.” (Fuger & Abel, 2008) During this session, fathers learn about the importance of bonding with children, the legal rights and responsibilities associated with fatherhood, and the benefits of cooperative relationships with the mothers of their children. Proud Parent typically lasts between 60 and 90 minutes. The session uses a lecture format but allows time for small- and large-group discussions. The workshop is specifically for fathers who are interested in learning more about the Fathers for Life Initiative. The Proud Parent curriculum can be implemented with different-size audiences, but is best suited for an audience that does not exceed 25 members.

## **24/7 Dad™**

24/7 Dad™ is a cutting-edge fatherhood program that focuses on characteristics that every father needs, and covers the universal aspects of fatherhood so that men from all cultures and races can relate and benefit. The National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI) designed the 24/7 Dad™ program to include 12 sessions and two optional parenting sessions that last about 60 to 90 minutes. NFI recommends a weekly format to create patterns of learning. However, sessions can be divided a number of ways. For instance, your site may choose to host six, two-hour sessions or four, three-hour sessions. The NFI recommends that no more than 10-12 fathers be included in each 24/7 Dad™ group.

Information from the pilot program evaluation suggests many of the participating men come from homes where the father was absent or was a poor role model, resulting in a lack of knowledge about how to be a good parent (Fuger & Abel, 2008). During 24/7 Dad™ sessions, fathers can polish their fathering skills while they learn about themselves and the important role they play in their children's lives. The sensitivity of some of the material covered makes it important for fathers to feel comfortable sharing their feelings and experiences.

### **Focus on Fathering**

Head Start programs have the opportunity to collaborate with local Parents as Teachers parent educators to offer Focus on Fathering group sessions designed to build their parenting skills. In the absence of Parents as Teachers parent educators, individuals with a background in early childhood can serve as facilitators. The one-hour, stand alone sessions cover the following topics of interest to fathers:

Places to Go	Child Development
Discipline	Ways to Play
Reading with Your Child	Parenting Apart
Siblings and Friends	Healthy Relationships
Self-esteem	Helping Your Child Deal with Feelings
Connecting with Your Child	Choosing Childcare

### **Parents as Teachers Individual Parent Coaching**

In addition to group sessions, some fathers with children under the age of five may have the opportunity to participate in individual sessions with a Parents as Teachers parent educator to learn about their child's development and to plan activities for playing with their child. Individualized parent guidance specifically designed for fathers is an exciting parent education opportunity. Parents as Teachers individual parent coaching, typically delivered through local school districts at the parent's home, is offered voluntarily to identified fathers not currently receiving services. Traditionally, Parents as Teachers educators have focused on delivery of services to mothers of young children. However, as part of Fathers for Life, Parents as Teachers educators specifically target fathers.

### **Parenting Apart**

Parenting Apart is a three-hour curriculum designed for parents of young children who do not live with them but want to learn how to better cooperate in their role as parents. During these workshops, parents learn about the importance of consistent parenting, explore how children develop, and practice positive decision-making strategies. These workshops provide many opportunities for parents to actively discuss their children while identifying strategies to improve their everyday parenting. The Parenting Apart curriculum was designed as three, one-hour sessions but can be implemented in any format that suits your agency and the families you serve. Facilitators who wish to complete the three-hour curriculum in one session should know that the format is active and uses a variety of learning strategies to maintain parents' interest. While it is possible to conduct these sessions with only one parent present, it is most effective if both parents attend and can practice the cooperative parenting techniques together. Parenting Apart sessions can be successfully implemented with large and small audiences. However, the recommended number of participants is no more than 10 couples.

### **Relationship Enrichment Skills**

The Relationship Enrichment Skills workshop is designed to provide couples who are parenting together the opportunity to learn and practice key communication skills with the help of experienced leader couples. During this three-hour workshop, parents learn a four-step model for resolving conflict, new ways to handle anger, and the importance of growth together as a couple. Due to the nature of the curriculum and topics, it is typically necessary to implement Relationship Enrichment Skills in one, three-hour setting as written. This intervention is designed specifically for parents who are currently in a relationship with one another, share the same household, and want to learn and practice new ways to communicate and problem solve. The Relationship Enrichment Skills workshop is designed for individual couples rather than a group setting. This format allows a mother and father to work one-on-one with a facilitator couple to build communication and problem-solving skills. The curriculum was designed for volunteer facilitator couples connected to faith-based agencies and organizations who have backgrounds in education, counseling, or a closely related field. In the absence of volunteer facilitators, fathers can be connected with local resources that offer couple skills and relationship enrichment classes.

In the pilot program, fathers generally gave the parenting sessions they attended very high ratings. Even more important, after participating in Fathers for Life, fathers reported improved communication, more ease in resolving parenting issues with mothers, and less conflict with the mother of their children, according to pre- and post-surveys. On average, fathers valued the roles of both parents in children's lives to a greater degree (Fuger & Abel, 2008).

### **Employment**

Realizing that some dads may have a hard time finding a job that allows them to care for their children the way they want to, one of the primary goals of Fathers for Life is to increase fathers'

access to employment and job training opportunities. Research findings identified potential employment barriers for men re-entering the community. Employers often failed to hire ex-offenders when they learned of drug-related violations. They were also known to hesitate after hearing of instances in which men instigated being fired to collect unemployment benefits or got hurt to collect Workman's Compensation, even if this was not a typical pattern (Fuger & Abel, 2008). Building a father's ability to project a different image to enter the workforce is vital, and collaboration with the state's workforce development agency is critical. These agencies can offer a wide variety of employment services, including vocational counseling and customized jobseeker services.

Career centers help fathers identify programs and services that can help them find and maintain employment. Prior to making referrals for this intervention, it may be beneficial to contact the workforce development agencies in your area, talk with them about Fathers for Life, and invite a representative to be a member of your local steering team. Your agency will want to ensure that all workforce development locations are aware of Fathers for Life and the commitment their agency has made to it. Talk with the representative about the special services they will be providing to those being referred from Fathers for Life and ensure that a system is created for notifying these offices whenever a father is affiliated with this project. State workforce development agencies can develop innovative ways of working with employers to more efficiently and successfully match individuals with jobs.

At the time of the post survey of the pilot program, a higher percentage of Fathers for Life participants were employed (53 percent compared to 30 percent initially) and, therefore, a lower percentage of them expressed the need for help to prepare for or find a job (61 percent compared to 29 percent initially) (Fuger & Abel, 2008).

### **Mediation**

Mediation, a problem-solving process facilitated by a neutral third party who helps individuals make informed decisions during conflict, can help mothers and fathers resolve issues about co-parenting. Mediation focuses on what is best for the child, is informal, confidential, and future focused, and encourages respect, fairness, and privacy. Mediation is cooperative rather than competitive, exposes parents to problem-solving strategies, and is less costly financially and emotionally than going to court. Perhaps the most important benefit of mediation is that the parents control decisions that affect their children and themselves.

Mediation services may be available through a number of diverse agencies and organizations. Collaboration with these agencies can help make mediation more accessible to Head Start families. Mediators work with a father and mother to create a parenting plan that addresses such issues as each parent's time with his or her children, child support, and custody. Explore mediation resources in your area to determine accessibility and referral processes.

### **Child Support Debt Waivers**

While child support debt waivers were part of the original Fathers for Life proposal, statutory authority did not exist in Missouri to implement the practice. Since state statutes vary, the possibility of child support debt waivers should be explored with the state's child support

agency. When exploring the possibility of developing a model for partial child support debt waivers, states should consider four guiding points:

- 1) Waivers should be for state-owed (assigned) payments only. Such waivers should be tied to positive behaviors such as regular payment of current support.
- 2) Support obligations should be established based on actual, not credited, income.
- 3) Child support agencies should not request state-debt judgments in attorney referrals against low-income parents but should instead focus on the regular payment of current support.
- 4) The process guided by these points should be made available to low-income individuals in general, including incarcerated, noncustodial parents and/or noncustodial parents on probation or parole.

### **Professional Development Sessions**

Head Start teachers, child support staff, probation and parole officers, and other professionals who work with young children and their families will learn about available resources for families and children and how to access them. Survey findings consistently reflected that trainees considered facilitators to be highly effective; trainees valued the training content; and trainees would recommend the facilitator training to others (Fuger & Abel, 2008).

**Working Collaboratively for Families:** Survey data indicated that professionals are interested in training opportunities that allowed them to get to know the work of other agencies. The Fathers for Life pilot program recommends a cross-training as the first professional development opportunity for this project. This session is designed to create an opportunity for child support, Head Start, and probation and parole staff to learn about the work of each other's agencies and build relationships that will allow them to better serve families and fathers. We expect this session to:

- Start building relationships among professionals that work with fathers and families;
- Provide an overview of the Fathers for Life program;
- Provide participants an overview of participating agencies (child support, Head Start and probation and parole); and
- Explore ways to collaborate to better serve fathers and families.

**Understanding Children's Needs:** The Understanding Children's Needs session is designed to help professionals explore the seven needs outlined by early childhood experts T. Barry Brazelton and Stanley Greenspan and discuss strategies for meeting these needs in families, communities, and classrooms. The session covers the following areas:

- Ongoing nurturing relationships;
- Physical protection, safety, and regulation;
- Experiences tailored to individual differences;
- Developmentally appropriate experiences;
- Limit setting, structure, and expectations;

- Stable, supportive communities and cultural continuity; and
- Protecting the future.

**Sharing Special-Topic Books with Children:** This professional development session is designed to enhance the classroom teacher's ability to use books to effectively promote social and emotional development in young children. We expect this session to meet the following goals:

- Discuss the important role books can play in children's social and emotional development;
- Explore the concept of emotional literacy and its importance both inside and outside the classroom; and
- Review several special-topic books and identify how they could be used in the classroom.

**Dads Matter?** This two-hour session is designed to help professionals explore the importance of nurturing father involvement in children's lives, as well as how it positively affects moms, dads, and children. Participants will review the impact of fathers and positive mother/father relationships. During this workshop, participants will gain the following:

- A greater understanding of fatherhood and the role of fathers in the lives of children;
- A chance to explore one's own biases related to fathers and families;
- An opportunity to discuss how to demonstrate empathy and respect when working with fathers; and
- An opportunity to discuss strategies that promote father involvement.

**Literature and Materials for Head Start Sites:** A diverse team of Missouri specialists identified the following books and resource materials for parents, children, and professionals. Special efforts were made to identify materials suitable for work with families that have a member involved with the criminal justice system. Resources include books for children, fathers, and professionals. The Fathers for Life Curriculum Manual includes a training to support professionals as they use special-topics books with children in their classrooms.

### **Books Recommended for Fathers of Young Children**

*101 Ways to Be a Long-Distance Super Dad...or Mom, Too!* By George Newman. Blossom Valley Press, Tucson, AZ: This book will help you make every moment of your relationship with your child count, no matter how far away you live.

*The Little Big Book for Dads* by Lena Tabori & Clark H. Wakabayashi. Welcome Enterprises, Inc., NY: This book is full of stories, tongue twisters, jokes, poetry, activities, recipes, nursery rhymes, and songs for dads to share with their children.

*Positive Discipline A-Z: 1001 Solutions to Everyday Parenting Problems* by Jane Nelsen, Lynn Lott, and Stephen Glenn. Three Rivers Press, NY: This book presents a commonsense approach to child rearing. It provides practical solutions to such parenting challenges as: sibling rivalry, bedtime hassles, children's anger, school problems, getting chores done, ADD, eating problems, getting through a divorce, whining, tattling and lying, homework, and dozens more.

### **Books Recommended for Incarcerated Fathers of Young Children**

Reading material must first be submitted to and approved by the state agency with oversight responsibility before inclusion in a state correctional facility library.

*Dads at a Distance: An Activities Handbook for Strengthening Long Distance Relationships* by the National Institute for Building Long Distance Relationships. A&E Family Publishers, Provo, UT: This handbook with 330 activities will help any father who has to be away from their children strengthen, nurture, and enjoy their relationships with their children while gone.

*Parenting From a Distance: Your Rights and Responsibilities* by Jan Walker. Book Publishers Network, Bothell, WA: This book is written for inmate parents to reach out to their children from prison and to prepare for their return to society. Parents separated by incarceration will learn how to explain prison and crimes in ways children can understand.

### **Books Recommended as Gifts from Fathers to Their Son or Daughter**

*Why a Son Needs a Dad: 100 Reasons* by Gregory E. Lang. Cumberland House Publishing, Nashville, TN: This book relates one father's reflection of his own experiences as a father and what he has learned from his daughter about being a father.

### **Books Recommended for Young Children**

These books cover a variety of topics to support children as they build their relationship with their fathers. The list also includes books that help children to explore and manage a range of emotions.

*Bigger Than Daddy* by Harriet Ziefert. Blue Apple Books, Maplewood, NJ: One afternoon, main character Edward asks his daddy to play a pretend game. Daddy agrees to be little, and Edward takes charge. This book will inspire kids and parents to create their own special games.

*I Love You All Day Long* by Francesca Rusackas and Priscilla Burris. HarperCollins Publishers, New York, NY: This book is a reassuring tale of how a parent's enduring love stays with a child whether they are together or apart.

*When I Miss You* by Cornelia M. Spelman and Kathy Parkinson. Albert Whitman and Company, Morton Grove, IL: Education about how to identify and handle our emotions is as important as other kinds of learning. This book uses simple and reassuring language to help young children understand and manage their feelings and express them successfully to others.

*When Sophie Gets Angry—Really, Really Angry* by Molly Bang. The Blue Sky Press, New York, NY: Everybody gets angry sometimes. Children will see what Sophie does when she gets angry. Parents, teachers, and children can talk about it.

*Hands Are Not for Hitting* by Martine Agassi and Marieka Heinlin. Free Spirit Publishing Inc., Minneapolis, MN: Simple words and charming pictures invite even the youngest children to use their hands for fun and caring actions and to understand that hitting is never okay.

*Words Are Not For Hurting* by Elizabeth Verdick and Marieka Heinlin. Free Spirit Publishing, Minneapolis: Children learn that their words belong to them. A section at the end includes activities and discussion starters for home, school, and childcare.

*The Berenstain Bears and the Big Road Race* by Stan and Jan Berenstain. Random House, Inc. NY: This learning-to-read book is a modern-day tortoise and hare.

*When I Am Old With You* by Angela Johnson and David Soman. Orchard Books, New York, NY: A small child imagines a future when he will be old with his granddaddy and will sit beside him and talk about everything. The book recognizes the bond of family love across generations.

*Visiting Day* by Jacqueline Woodson  
Scholastic

A young girl looks forward to the day she gets to visit her father in prison. It only happens once a month and it's a very special day.

*Just the Two of Us* by Will Smith and Kadir Nelson. Scholastic Press, New York, NY: Heartfelt words from a father capturing the beauty and intensity of a father's love as his child grows from a boy into a man.

### **Books for Early Head Start/Head Start Teachers**

The books listed below have been recommended for Head Start teachers and other Head Start staff members.

*The Scared Child: Helping Kids Overcome Traumatic Events* by Barbara Brooks and Paula M. Siegel. John Wiley & Sons, New York, NY: Co-written by a psychologist, this book provides detailed instructions to help children through all types of traumatic situations through words, drawings, and role playing.



*Fatherneed: Why Father Care is as Essential as Mother Care for Your Child* by Kyle D. Pruett.

The Free Press, New York, NY: This book discusses differences in how mothers and fathers parent. It is a how-to guide for engaged fathering that will give your children skills to develop into happy and healthy adults.

*Why Fathers Count: The Importance of Fathers and Their Involvement with Children* by Sean E. Brotherson and Joseph M. White. Men's Studies Press, Harriman, TN: This book discusses the importance of fathers and their involvement with children.

*A Volcano in My Tummy: Helping Children to Handle Anger* by Eliane Whitehouse and Warwick Pudney. New Society Publishers, Gabriola Island, Canada: This book contains new, creative, and useful approaches for teachers and caregivers to help young children learn effective and nonviolent ways of responding to anger.

*Helping Your Angry Child - Worksheets, Fun Puzzles, and Engaging Games to Help You Communicate Better: A Workbook for You and Your Family* by Darlyne Gaynor Nemeth, Ph.D, Kelly Paulk Ray, Ph.D. & Maydel Morin Schexnayder. New Harbinger Publications, Inc., Oakland, CA: This workbook has worksheets, fun puzzles, and engaging games to help facilitate better communication with children.

*Healthy Anger: How to Help Children and Teens Manage Their Anger* by Bernard Golden. Oxford University Press, Inc., New York, NY: This book contains a wealth of insight, advice, and practical strategies for turning anger into understanding.

*Throwaway Dads: The Myths and Barriers That Keep Men from Being the Fathers They Want to Be* by Ross D. Parke & Armin A. Brott. Houghton Mifflin Company, New York, NY: This book addresses the myths and barriers that keep men from being the fathers they want to be.

## **Fathers for Life Interventions - Correctional Facility Setting**

If a correctional facility is nearby, there are a number of ways staff and inmates can be involved in Fathers for Life.

**Local Team Membership:** Local Fathers for Life sites have generally included a prison superintendent on their steering team when their program service area includes a correctional facility. These superintendents have been effective partners for helping agencies reach fathers that are approaching release and ensuring that initiatives are connected to re-entry teams.

**Books and Educational Materials:** Correctional facilities' libraries may accept books and educational materials for fathers who wish to build their parenting skills. The designated official within the state agency that provides prison oversight may need to review and approve the materials.

**Parent Education for Incarcerated Fathers:** Fathers in correctional facilities can also be offered the opportunity to participate in sessions to improve their parenting skills. Many of the parent education opportunities listed previously, including Focus on Fathering, can be adapted for use in correctional facilities. Individuals providing sessions to inmates will need to talk with facility management about orientation trainings and other preparations that should be made before entering the prison.

**Enhanced Child Visiting Areas:** Many children visit correctional facilities to spend time with parents and loved ones. If funding is available, the child visiting areas can be redesigned to address a wide array of developmental and learning skills as well as encourage interaction between fathers and their children. Below are examples of what can be done:

**Reading Area:** A reading area includes appropriate books and seating for adults and children. The area is designed to:

- Boost literacy skills for both children and the offenders.
- Build stronger communication and verbal skills.
- Build positive relationships for offenders and their children.

**Dramatic Play Area:** The dramatic play area can include a pretend kitchen, puppet theatre, and puppets. This area is designed to:

- Allow freedom of expression.
- Build communication skills.
- Provide a strong foundation for social interaction.
- Enable problem solving.

**Motor Skills Area:** The motor skills area can include various blocks, beads, activity tables, and stacking activities. This area is designed to:

- Build problem-solving skills.
- Enhance motor skills in all ages.
- Strengthen hand-eye coordination.
- Begin to build concepts of height, weight, length, and balance.
- Provide understanding of space.

**Puzzle & Game Area:** The puzzle and game area can include a variety of games and puzzles and is designed to:

- Enable educational interaction between adult and child.
- Build fine motor control.
- Teach conflict resolution.
- Provide understanding of rule making and negotiation strategies.

**Outdoor Area:** Correctional facilities may be able to designate an unused outside area for

fathers and their children and create multi-activity playground sets and picnic areas for families.

## **Tailoring a Program to Your Community**

This section provides you with the information and tools to support your program in designing and implementing a Fathers for Life model tailored to your community.

Now that you've decided to introduce your agency and community to the Fathers for Life project, it's time to do some preliminary planning for recruiting and involving fathers. The following list of tasks has been helpful to other Fathers for Life sites in building their programs. While many of these tasks are necessary for the project, your agency and community might change the order or combination of tasks to suit your project's needs.

The Fathers for Life model for father involvement was designed as a flexible and adaptable model that provides a number of options for different communities. As you browse the program materials, you will find resources that can prepare your agency to provide a range of interventions for fathers and families, a number of professional development opportunities for your staff and other agencies in your community, and a variety of resources to support your staff inside and outside the classroom.

While we have found all of these resources and interventions to be effective, your agency and community should customize a program to best meet the needs of the fathers and families you serve. It is not necessary to use all of the interventions in the same ways they have been used in other communities. In fact, it is not even necessary to use all of the interventions. Work closely with your staff and others in the community to decide what components of this project are best suited to your program's service delivery area and the structure of your Head Start agency.

Below are a few strategies to inform your decisions about this project.

**Mapping Community Assets:** Decisions about which interventions to include in your program should be based on a thorough investigation of the resources and supports that now exist in your community for fathers and families. Fathers for Life is strongly based on the premise that when quality services exist that serve the same purpose as those created for the project, referrals to those resources should replace efforts to create additional programs.

Previous Fathers for Life sites have found a resource matrix useful for investigating available resources and evaluating the need for Fathers for Life interventions. The process of mapping resources can be critical for several reasons. First, identifying existing resources is important for avoiding duplications. Second, communities should have a clear map of the variety of services and support systems available for families. This map will facilitate better connections to community resources for parents and professionals. This resource guide can support professionals in referring families to appropriate services.

Most Fathers for Life sites have used a dual method approach to create a comprehensive map of community resources. Some states may maintain a web-based directory outlining community

services in their region. In addition, many agencies that work with youth and families, including Head Start programs such as your own, maintain resource directories that allow them to make referrals for their clients. For the purpose of creating this map, we recommend that you obtain directories from agencies you work with, including local university extension offices.

From this process, your agency will be able to easily create a matrix of resources capturing services similar to interventions for this project, along with services that may serve as strong referral sources for professionals. This matrix will serve as a useful tool as your agency considers the type of Fathers for Life model that is best for you.

**Using a Community Team to Support Your Decision-Making:** In addition to creating a resource matrix to drive decision-making, it is recommended that your agency look to a community team to support the development of your model. Previous Fathers for Life sites were successful with creating Fathers for Life local steering teams as outlined in the community development section of this manual. We highly recommend that you consider the value of this component as other communities report that the most powerful and sustainable outcomes of this project have been directly related to their work with these teams. If there are other multi-agency groups in your area that share a similar mission, your agency may choose to look to that group for feedback. It will also be important to involve your local policy council and board of directors in this phase of project planning. Involving them in decision-making and early planning will ensure their commitment and contributions to the project.

**Managing the Project:** Fathers for Life was designed to be absorbed into the existing culture of Head Start, without adding additional paid staff. In order to make this a reality, planning should revolve around incorporating project tasks where they fit best within the culture and structure of your agency. Each of the previous Fathers for Life project sites have handled staffing in different ways and divided tasks creatively within their Head Start program. Responsibilities were also delegated to other agencies via the local steering team. While it is recommended that you think creatively about staffing for this project, here are examples of tasks that might be necessary:

- 1) **Designate a Liaison:** Select one person that will serve as the main liaison between your agency and the state-level management team to ensure that you maintain effective communication while satisfying any reporting requirements that your state team might require.
- 2) **Prepare Staff:** Prepare your entire staff for the role they will play. Inform them of the potential culture change your program might undergo when implementing Fathers for Life. All members of your Head Start team should have a thorough understanding of the Fathers for Life project and their potential role in the initiative—from referring fathers to services to offering their classrooms for intervention sessions.
- 3) **Train Facilitators:** You might need to prepare a number of facilitators to deliver interventions. Select a person or persons who can provide this type of intervention training for staff. Your agency is free to use the tools provided to prepare your facilitators in the ways you see fit for your site. All curricula were designed so that an

experienced facilitator can pick them up and effectively deliver them with little or no training.

## **Identifying and Recruiting Children and Families**

Now that your agency has made decisions about a suitable model and your team has been selected and trained, you are ready to begin identifying and recruiting fathers and families. Recruitment has been strongly based on agency awareness and referrals. Here are some tips and strategies that have been proven effective at other sites:

**Agency Awareness/Presentations:** Fathers for Life recruitment was consistently driven by an agency awareness model centered on community presentations. Previous project sites launched recruitment efforts through a series of agency presentations to educate professionals in the community about the Fathers for Life project, and prepared them to refer interested fathers. Presentations have typically been co-facilitated by a Head Start staff person and a representative from the agency receiving the presentation. Talking points for agencies ranging from probation and parole to ministerial alliances are provided in the public awareness portion of this manual. While initial presentations have served as effective recruitment tools, recruitment increased significantly when agencies received follow-up presentations highlighting successful recruitment efforts.

**Brochure Distribution:** Previous Fathers for Life sites have reinforced recruitment efforts by distributing brochures throughout their communities. From doctor's offices to county health departments, brochures can be an effective recruitment tool, especially when they are available in places parents frequent.

**Link to Other Programs/Services:** Fathers for Life sites can boost recruitment by linking to existing events, programs, and services that involve fathers and families. For instance, some sites have been able to either conduct Proud Parent sessions or deliver shorter recruitment presentations at orientation sessions offered by agencies such as workforce development, probation and parole, and the family support division. Explore your community to identify events and programs to recruit at. A local steering team can be extraordinarily helpful as you work to identify these types of opportunities.

**Recruitment from Your Head Start Program:** Many Fathers for Life sites have found that their strongest recruitment sources are their own staff. Head Start has a long history of supporting children and their families, making it a natural atmosphere for discussing fatherhood programs with the families they serve. Other sites have used a variety of strategies to capitalize on Head Start's ability to reach families, including:

- Training family advocates to recruit fathers during home visits, office visits, center events, and telephone conversations (refer to the Talking Points for Head Start Staff);
- Sending Fathers for Life brochures in enrollment packets;
- Sending intervention brochures home with children; and
- Conducting Proud Parent or Focus on Fathering sessions during family fun nights.

## Identifying Children and Families with a Father in the Criminal Justice System

As already mentioned, the Fathers for Life model is designed with all fathers in mind and we believe all fathers would benefit from its interventions. However, interventions may be particularly valuable for fathers facing difficult or challenging situations. Head Start staff can identify families with a father involved in the criminal justice system in several ways:

**Application:** All programs determine program eligibility using “Eligibility Priority Criteria.” Eligibility is based on a point system and determined by factors such as a child’s age, family income, high-risk factors, and potential child disability. Sites can include in their Eligibility Priority Criteria a high-risk factor that specifically mentions having an incarcerated parent or caregiver in the criminal justice system. When assessing family situations and potential high risks, staff can ask a generalized question such as whether the family is experiencing a challenging or difficult situation they would like support with. Staff can explain the Fathers for Life program to identified families using a program brochure. The brochure will include information on the project, a brief description of the interventions, and a contact name if the family is interested.

**Enrollment and Home Visits:** Families generally tend to be more at ease with family advocates. Client/staff relationships develop as a program progresses into home visits. Enrollment is a time when needs and services are assessed with families. This process typically continues over the course of the program year, specifically through home visits and the development of Family Partnership Agreements. If a family has not already been identified, this is a time when more specific questions can be asked, giving family advocates a chance to review the Fathers for Life brochure and provide contact information for interested families.

Once the framework is in place for this project and your public awareness campaign is in full swing, fathers will begin calling your agency to discuss the project. You will need to give thought to how you will handle the referrals that surface as a result of this project. Who will take initial calls from fathers? Who will introduce them to the project? Will they be referred directly to interventions or does your agency wish to complete an intake process to help the father determine the most appropriate interventions? If so, who will complete this intake? Who will follow up with Dad? Previous sites have dealt with referrals in different ways. Some sites have designated a family advocate in each county to handle referrals, while others have chosen one agency representative to handle all incoming fathers. We encourage you to think creatively about how this part of the project will work for you and how you can use local team resources to manage referrals. Our work in other sites has convinced us that a father’s decision to participate in interventions is likely to depend on the type of relationship he develops with the person that introduces him to the program. If trust is developed at this stage, the father is more likely to involve himself further in the program. Family advocates may be the best individuals to develop this type of rapport and drive participation, but keep in mind there may be other models that fit better with your agency.

## Service Integration

While your agency may choose to refer fathers immediately and directly to interventions, we highly recommend that fathers with special circumstances such as those under the supervision of probation and parole receive more in-depth services as they enter the Fathers for Life program. Fathers on probation or parole face many obstacles to successful participation in their communities and families. The immediacy of practical needs for housing, employment, and transportation frequently affect the fathers, their children, and other family members. Additionally, deeper psycho-social problems experienced by the father and other family members often compound these challenges and may require education, counseling, or treatment. While relationships among the family members potentially strengthen improvements made in other areas, proactive support is often not available to foster healthy relationships between the parents and between each parent and each child. Fathers who have been incarcerated seldom received training in parenting or child development, and many were not effectively fathered themselves. The children are at risk for becoming the next generation in the criminal justice system if parent training and other supports are not provided.

### **Intake and Enrollment**

While many community agencies can address part of the problem, one agency is typically not equipped to address every challenge presented by a father and his family. The purpose of case management/service integration services is to facilitate fathers' successful redirection to productive lives, while concurrently supporting young children and other family members who encounter challenging transitions in this process. Using a coordinated approach that reflects the complexity and variety of family circumstances is likely to minimize confusion among agencies and family stress while making the most appropriate use of available community supports.

It is recommended that fathers in these situations receive comprehensive and consistent support in reaching the goals they identify for themselves and their families. This does not necessarily mean the Head Start agency will provide case management services for each father that enters the program under these circumstances.

The Fathers for Life model suggests that when necessary and desired, case management responsibilities should be shared with a service coordinator most suitable for the role. For example, if the father is seeking employment training and placement through workforce development agencies, the workforce development case manager could fulfill all primary service coordination functions for the father while appropriate Head Start staff provide referrals to specific Fathers for Life interventions.

Whether provided by the local Head Start agency or another agency, case management services should assist fathers in identifying priority issues that need attention. Parents should have the opportunity to consider areas such as employment, income, parenting, education, physical and mental health, transportation, and housing. Using these priorities, fathers can work with case managers to identify long- and short-term goals and the steps necessary to achieve them. As a part of this process, case managers can link fathers with the appropriate resources and agencies to support them as they pursue their goals. Ideally, case management services should include regular follow-up sessions to assess progress and to adjust action plans as needed.

Case management services in previous Fathers for Life sites have uniquely involved the collaboration of Head Start, probation and parole services, and other appropriate agencies. This collaboration benefits fathers and their families because, when appropriate, it facilitates the coordination of individual and family-centered plans. Care can be taken to ensure that fathers build on existing plans that were created before their release from correctional facilities. As is true of all components of this project, it is important that your Head Start agency develop a case management model best suited for your work with parents and families. The following is a model that has been used by previous Fathers for Life sites to begin to build a multi-agency case management system for these fathers. While we hope the sample intake form included in Section 5 is helpful to you as you develop your program, we also encourage you to consider changes that will create the most sustainable model for your program.

**Fathers for Life Model for Ensuring Quality Case Management for Fathers** - Based on the initial intake, the individual performing the Fathers for Life intake will determine if the father needs and wants case management services. If the intake process indicates he would benefit from and wants the service, the individual will determine if the father or his family is eligible for or receiving case management services from Head Start, the community action agency, workforce development, or other agencies identified by Head Start. If the father or his family is currently receiving case management services from one of these agencies, the individual will begin with Process A detailed below. If neither the father nor his family is receiving case management services from one of these designated agencies, the individual will begin with Process B, also detailed below.

### **Process A**

- If the father reports that he has a child currently enrolled in Head Start, a connection should be made with the Head Start case manager to determine if that father is a part of the family plan.
- If the father is a part of the family plan the Head Start case manager will handle all services for this father and family.
- If the father is not a part of the family plan, the Head Start case manager should decide if it is appropriate to include the father on the family's plan. Specifically, the case manager will work to include the father on the family plan if all family members are agreeable, if there are no protective orders that raise concern for the safety of any family member, and if the inclusion of the father does not pose a risk to the family's successful completion of the plan.
  1. If it is determined that it is appropriate that the father be included on the family plan, the Head Start case manager will coordinate with the family to make this change.
  2. If the Head Start case manager determines with the family that it is not appropriate for the father to be included on the family plan, the coordinator will proceed to process B, part 3.



If it is determined that the father is eligible for or is currently receiving service integration/case management services through the community action agency, workforce development or other approved agencies it will not be necessary to provide additional case management services.

### **Process B**

- If it is determined during the intake process that the father has a child who is Head Start eligible but not currently enrolled, the individual will try to enroll the child. If space is currently available for the child(ren) in the Head Start center, the Head Start case manager will work with the family/father to complete the appropriate process for family plan development. If however, the child(ren) will be placed on a waiting list for Head Start enrollment, arrangements will be made to provide case management/service integration services to this father/family through the local community action agency or other appropriate agency.
- If the coordinator determines during the intake process that the father is eligible for and is interested in services through the local community action agency, the community action agency will be contacted and arrangements will be made for the father to begin case management. If your Head Start agency is not affiliated with the local community action agency, your staff will want to work in advance to determine the types of services this agency provides.
- If the coordinator determines during the intake process that the father is eligible and interested in workforce development programs or programs through other agencies providing appropriate case management, contact will be made with that agency to arrange for the father to begin case management.

In the interest of sustainability, the Fathers for Life model does not provide a specific case management model, rather recommending that each Head Start program use the case management model of their respective agency. With that said, the model assumes that quality case management will include:

- (1) Intake
- (2) Needs Assessment
- (3) Goal Setting
- (4) Action Planning
- (5) Follow-up

Intake - In order to complete a comprehensive intake process, initial meetings should take place in a one-on-one setting. A sample Fathers for Life intake form is provided in Section 5 of this manual. However, your agency may have an existing intake process that would serve the same purpose. This process should allow the agency to gather the following types of information:

- General demographics
- Background about the father's children, including ages and custody arrangements
- General assessment of strengths/needs on issues such as housing, transportation, and employability
- History of the father paying and/or receiving child support if applicable

- Background about the father's conditions of probation and parole
- Summary of the Fathers for Life programs that may be appropriate for this father/family

At the time of intake, the needs of the fathers and their families should be assessed and connections will be made with appropriate services/resources within the community. During the process, and if appropriate, the intake facilitator should determine if the father has a transition plan that was developed prior to leaving a correctional facility. If so, a copy to guide the planning process should be obtained.

**Strengths-Based Needs Assessment** - After completing the intake, staff should work with the fathers/families to identify both immediate and long-term needs. This should be done by using the project intake form in conjunction with the Head Start agency's forms and assessment tools. Consideration should be given to the following areas of functioning:

- Basic needs, including issues such as housing, transportation, clothing, financial resources, health, mental health, and daycare;
- Relationships with the mother/father of their children, parenting, support systems, and domestic violence;
- Employability, including issues such as education and vocational planning; and
- Other needs which may include concerns such as legal issues and substance abuse.

During the needs assessment process, the case manager should summarize the needs and strengths of the father/family. The summary should allow the case manager to work with the family to establish goals and action plans. In addition, the case manager should use these tools to identify any emergency needs requiring immediate referral. Emergency needs might include situations where a family does not have immediate shelter or a member requires immediate health care. The case manager should use agency programs/services and outside referrals to meet emergency needs within a 30-day timeframe. Addressing emergency needs shall take precedence over long-term goal setting and action planning.

**Goal Setting** - Once the case manager has worked to assist the family in satisfying any emergency needs that emerged during the needs assessment process, the focus should shift to setting goals with the father/family. Based on a full needs assessment, the case manager should work with the family to set realistic goals for improving family function. Goals should include a projected completion date.

**Action Planning** - After setting goals, the case manager should cooperate with the family to develop action plans for each identified goal. Action plans should include the necessary steps for achieving goals, a set timeframe for each action item, and the identification of who is responsible for each action item. In considering plans, the case manager should determine if any Fathers for Life programs will assist the family in achieving its goals and should also make appropriate referrals to outside agencies.

**Follow Up** - With family goals and action plans in place, the case managers should conduct follow-up sessions with the fathers/families to track progress. During these sessions, the case manager will complete the following:

- Update the intake form;
- Use the Head Start agency's forms to review progress toward goals identified in the initial planning process. Utilize update of intake form to identify needs that may have emerged since the initial process. Review potential eligibility for programs and the potential benefit of such assistance;
- Use the Head Start agency's forms to check up on referrals that were made at the time of family plan development. Referral follow-up discussions will allow the case manager to determine if the father/family tried to access the resource. If so, was it successful? What was the outcome? If the father/family was unable to access the resource, the case manager will identify other methods to assist the family in doing so;
- Connect with other professionals providing resources and supports to the father and family such as the probation or parole officer, drug court staff, etc.; and
- Update the father/family's files to reflect progress toward goals and to record case notes from the follow-up session.

## **Father Interventions**

Like other Fathers for Life sites, you will choose a unique model that is best suited for the community or communities your agency serves. Fathers for Life interventions for fathers are described in this section of the manual. Full curriculum and facilitator guides are found in the curriculum manual. Depending on the interventions you choose, you will need to select facilitators who can effectively deliver the curriculum. Some interventions, such as Parenting Apart, Proud Parent, Relationship Enrichment Skills, and 24/7 Dad™ were designed so that professionals from a variety of agencies could serve as facilitators. While most sites have chosen to train facilitators within their own Head Start agency, it is also possible to select facilitators from other agencies. Your agency may want to examine the organizations in your community to determine if any of them have team members who would be effective and willing facilitators for these interventions. The Focus on Fathering curriculum, while designed for a variety of facilitators, is typically facilitated by local Parent as Teachers parent educators. If your agency wishes to implement this intervention, we recommend that you contact the Parents as Teachers office in your local school district to begin discussing this possibility.

**Intervention Management** - Many Head Start agencies maintain a service area that encompasses multiple counties. For this reason, it is possible that your model may include the implementation of a number of different interventions in a number of different counties. You will need to designate individuals who can effectively manage implementation logistics. Who will reserve rooms for interventions? Who will ensure fliers are distributed to Head Start children prior to the intervention? Who will create a calendar to display all interventions being offered in your service area? Clearly these types of tasks can be effectively distributed throughout your agency. Perhaps facilitators will make their own room arrangements. Maybe a family advocate in each county will be responsible for creating a calendar of county-wide interventions. This project will only be successful if you choose an intervention model that works with your existing practices. The following are some general tips that have been helpful to previous Fathers for Life sites during the implementation phase:

- If your agency serves a multi-county region, it may be more manageable to phase in your implementation gradually, beginning in one county before moving to others.
- Use your local steering team to troubleshoot issues that arise as you begin implementation.
- Reinforce the general public awareness campaign you launched in earlier stages of the planning process by publicizing individual interventions through your Head Start centers and other local agencies. For example, you might send 24/7 Dad™ posters home with each child prior to launching a series or send a description of the Parenting Apart session to your local probation and parole officers with upcoming workshop dates. Consider hosting intervention sessions as a part of other well-attended agency events. For instance, how about hosting a Focus on Fathering session as part of a family fun night, or offering a Proud Parent session after a workforce development orientation?
- Strive to remove all known barriers to attendance. Can you provide child care for parents who want to attend? Can you provide dinner while they are there? How can you address the transportation issues some parents might have?

### **Professional Development Opportunities**

A large component of the Fathers for Life model is its emphasis on changing how agencies and organizations work with fathers and families. A variety of professional development sessions have been designed to support professionals in learning about the importance of fatherhood and collaboration and the needs of children and strategies for working with them. Please refer to the earlier portion of this section for detailed descriptions of each professional development session. All of these sessions can benefit your staff and many may be opportunities you wish to offer other community agencies. The curricula for these sessions are available in the Fathers for Life Curriculum Manual.

### **Continuous Improvement**

The Service coordination mechanisms and service provider partners in a given community influence the sustainability and continuous improvement of services for fathers and families. The network of service coordinators and service providers will become more proficient as individuals gain skill and experience filling these roles. The success of the individual service providers depends on support of their respective agencies. Ongoing professional development to address attrition and continue professionals' advancement in skills is an additional component of continuous quality improvement. Their commitment to sustaining the work and ensuring quality is aided by regular evaluation and analysis of the successes and challenges encountered. A system of recording activities and summarizing progress is helpful for informing the long-term implementation and planning for development as the program matures over time.